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A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION--PEACEMAKING

Many of us begin the new year with fresh new year's resolutions. One of those resolutions could easily be to move from being abstractly concerned about peace to working directly as a peacemaker in our world today.

This year, for the first time in the history of the United Church of Christ, a special Peace Offering may enable us to carry out that new year's resolution. Most churches in the UCC will receive an all-church Peace Offering this year--an offering voted by the UCC Fourteenth General Synod for Pentecost 1984 and 1985.

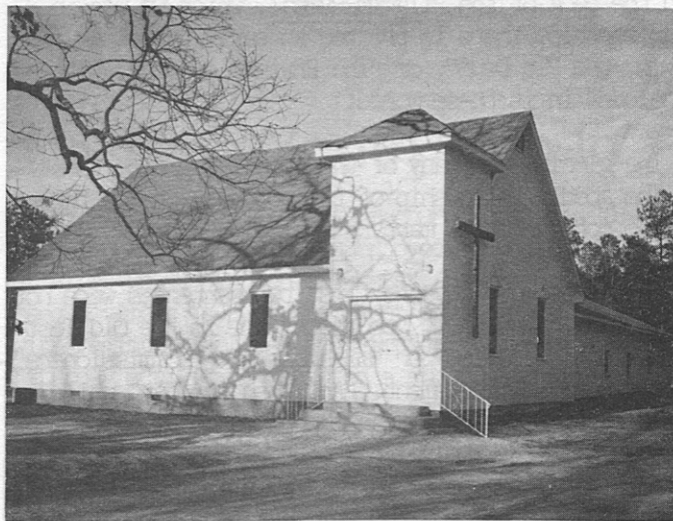
And, in an innovative move, General Synod voted that twenty-five percent of the offering may remain in the local church to help us, the church members, to take part in a peacemaking ministry--to help us to become peacemakers. Twenty-five percent of the offering will also be used by UCC conferences and fifty percent will be used by the UCC national bodies for promotion and program.

This year, take action for peace! Take the Peace Offering in your congregation and use some of the gifts for your own peacemaking ministry!

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AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Liberty Congregational Church in Dewey Rose, GA, was organized in August, 1878, by Rev. Moses G. Fleming whose great, great grandchildren are members of the church today. The current pastor is the Rev. Richard D. Willis.



(Liberty Congregational Church, UCC
Dewey Rose, GA)

In March, 1983, after much prayer and advice it was felt that the old sanctuary, due to structural decay, needed to be replaced. It was at this time that Liberty temporarily moved into the fellowship hall (built in 1978) and began the process of rebuilding.

Easter, 1983, was the last service held in the 105 year old building which had served as a church, school, and community meeting house at different points of its history. It took a period of only 35 weeks to tear down the old structure and erect the new sanctuary. With the exception of major construction tasks, the membership of Liberty provided all the labor.

We celebrate with Liberty and its pastor, Rev. Willis, on the great love and dedication with which they accomplished this task.

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-David Beebe

I have often heard it said of the United Church of Christ that it has no doctrine, no teachings, no understanding of the nature of the Church. I believe that this statement is untrue. Indeed I believe the lack of certainty arises from the fact that in the UOC there have come together three doctrines of the Church. And I think we may helpfully look at these three under the headings of "Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs"—or "Witnesses", the true meaning of the third word.

In the back of the Pilgrim Hymnal, which we use in our worship, there is printed an early Christian hymn, the "Te Deum", or "The Praises of God". It includes in it these words:

The glorious company of the apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise thee.

I used to wonder why the first two sentences were not reversed. After all, "prophets" are in the Old Testament and "apostles" or "missioners"—"commissioners"—are in the New Testament. And then one day, while reading an early Christian church handbook, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", I understood: the "prophets" referred to in this hymn are not those of the Old Testament but the New Testament "prophets", those who spoke in the Christian assemblies the living Word of God.

"Apostles" were those recognized authorities whose responsibility it was to hand on the original Christian teaching. "Prophets" were inspired preachers who declared the living Word of God. "Martyrs" or "Witnesses" were those Christians who were willing to testify to their faith in the quality of their lives, even sometimes to the point of being persecuted or killed for their faith. These three categories, I believe, may helpfully be used as symbols of the three views of the Church in the United Church of Christ.

From the Evangelical and Reformed Church—and, to some extent, from the Congregational Churches—we received that understanding of the Church which sees the Church as the place where the grace of God is transmitted by duly chosen representatives. In this, the Reformed faith was following its Roman Catholic origins. Catholics believe that the Church is the place where grace may be found, administered through the hands of the chosen priests, especially through the sacraments. The Lutheran reformers broadened this to include the preaching of the Word. The followers of John Calvin broadened the idea still further to include the idea of the exercise of pastoral care. The classic Reformed teaching of the nature of the

nature of the Church is this:

Where the sacraments are rightly administered and received; where the Word of God is rightly preached and heard; where pastoral discipline is rightly exercised and accepted; there, without doubt, is the Church.

This definition of the Church is reflected in the definition of the ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ Constitution, Article V, paragraph 20:

An ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its members who has been called by God and ordained to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership.

That is, the Church is the community where the "Apostles" (and their successors in ordained ministry) convey the grace of God.

In the early Congregational Churches—and also in the frontier Christian Churches—there was a strong emphasis upon the church as the community of the faithful, of those who witness to their faith through committed lives. Indeed, the early Congregational leaders and teachers, like ourselves, frequently defined the Church in the words of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I among them." This is to see the Church as a community of "witnesses", of the faithful.

In the early 20th century, however, under the influence of such German theologians as Albrecht Ritschl and such American theologians as the Baptist, Walter Rauschenbusch, and the Congregationalist, Shailer Matthews, we began to see the Church as an instrument for social righteousness, as a means to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. We came to see the Church as the "prophet" of a new world as God wills it to be: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." In this we were also picking up the frontier emphasis on the Church as the proclaimer, the preacher of divinely-directed morality.

The concept of the Church as the "prophet", the forerunner of the Kingdom of God has powerfully affected the United Church of Christ in the strong positions we have taken on such social issues as economic, racial, and cultural equality; or peace; or social justice.

To sum up, the Church as we see it is "catholic", in the sense that it continues and proclaims the ancient Christian faith and means of grace. It is "evangelical" in the sense that it puts great stress upon the personal religious experience of the believers and upon the community of believers. It is
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A Revised Parable

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves who stripped him and beat him and left him half dead. A priest and a Levite passed by without giving him any assistance. But a certain Samaritan saw him and said to him: "I see that you're in a bad way and I'd like to help, but before I do, I need to ask you a few questions—First of all, are you now or have you ever been a member of any party or organization which seeks to overthrow the government of Samaria by force?"

"Second, do you support any government which is hostile to Samaria?"

"Third, do you approve of Samaria's economic policies in developing nations?"

"Fourth, have you made any statement critical of the Samaritan way of life or ever criticized Samaria as a 'flawed nation'?"

"Fifth, are you a 'romantic naive person' who believes that social and economic justice is of equal importance to the freedom we Samaritans enjoy?"

"And finally, before I give you any food or medical supplies, I need to have you sign an affidavit that you won't use them to benefit anyone who is unfriendly to Samaria."

But by this time the man had died for lack of care, so the Samaritan continued on his journey thinking, "Oh well, at least I know my money didn't go to any questionable causes."

—from KEEPING IN TOUCH, a publication of the Vermont Conference of the UCC.

"You have not done enough, you have never done enough, so long as it is possible that you have something of value to contribute."

—Dag Hammarskjöld

"Our efforts sometimes may look futile, our arguments ineffective. But I remind myself of small steps, or relative victories, and of the power of our collective faith. Then, I feel hopeful and at home here in our wide community of peacemakers."

—Leslie Hunt, intern in the Washington Office of the UCC Office for Church in Society.

APOSTLES, PROPHETS, MARTYRS (continued from page 2)

"reformed" in the sense that it constantly proclaims the call of God to reform both the Church and society.

So the Church is the place where grace is found; it is the place where the living and transforming Word of God is proclaimed. It is the community of the Apostles, the Witnesses, and the Prophets. It is catholic (that is, a part of the universal Christian faith). It is evangelical (in that it lives by the Good News). And it is reformed (in that it proclaims the transforming and re-forming Word). The Church is truly catholic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed.

Ala-Tenn Youth "Pop-In"

Fifty youth and advisors from churches of the Alabama-Tennessee Association enjoyed a "pop-in" held at First United Church of Christ, Belvidere, Tennessee, November 18-20. The event began Friday evening with registration, get-acquainted games, and snacks. Saturday activities included a study and discussion session on "Values," the theme for the weekend, an outing at Tims Ford State Park, a bonfire, a "Values auction," more games, and three delicious meals. Roberta Walmer, a teacher of the youth class at Belvidere, led the theme meetings. On Sunday morning the participants were treated to a generous breakfast by the Belvidere Men's Brotherhood and then became a singing group, providing special music for Church School and Worship. The youth and advisors came from the United Church of Huntsville, AL, Brookmeade Congregational Church, Nashville, TN, First United Church of Christ, Sweetwater, TN, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Chattanooga, TN, St. John's United Church of Christ, Cullman, AL, and the host church. Janna Thacher of the hosting Youth Fellowship served as coordinating leader for the weekend.

Since a number of the members of the newly formed Youth Council of the Alabama-Tennessee Association were participants in the "pop-in," a special meeting of that body was held Saturday afternoon under the leadership of Dan Ramey, youth advisor from the Brookmeade Church. Youth Council responsibilities were discussed and a form of organization was adopted.

Future AL-TN "Pop-ins" will be held February 3-5 at Huntsville, AL, and March 16-18 at Sweetwater, TN.

"Everyone must work to live, but the purpose of life is to serve and to show compassion and the will to help others, only then have we ourselves become human beings.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Multiply a miracle



one great hour of sharing UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

One Great Hour of Sharing is coming! The suggested date for this United Church of Christ all-church offering in April 1st.

The 1984 OGHS poster is shown above. The loaves and fishes remind us that through this offering we are able to "multiply a miracle" in seventy-three countries around the world. Through OGHS we are able to feed and help persons in times of disaster--when flood, drought, earthquake, and fire leave victims in need. But disaster relief is not the only kind of help we provide through our gifts. The development of existing resources and skills is an important part of One Great Hour of Sharing. For example, farmers in Togo, West Africa, now cultivate seven times more land than they could previously because of a tractor project implemented there.

This past year, we were able to provide medical supplies to Barbados for victims from Grenada. And over 200 persons in Hodal, India who were blinded by cataracts had their sight restored with eye operations supported by gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

We in the UCC have helped to multiply miracles around the world--and we can continue to do so through our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

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SHARE IN THE COST OF YOUR MINISTER'S SOCIAL SECURITY... Borrowed from the Pension Fund Bulletin of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Though churches are now required to pay Social Security taxes on all employees, they are forbidden to pay them directly for their ordained ministers. Even though treated as employees otherwise, when it comes to this, ministers are required to pay the Social Security taxes at the self-employed rate.....

Therefore, our pastors are facing an ever increasing obligation, much larger than many suppose. The tax is assessed, not only on all cash salary, but also upon the fair rental value of the parsonage or the amount of parsonage allowance. The wage limits on which the tax is assessed are so high that virtually all ministers will be required to pay the tax upon all cash salary and housing.....

Therefore, we feel that the time has now arrived for congregations to consider entering into a partnership with their ministers in meeting the Social Security tax.

In this connection, we have suggested that Social Security tax "offset" payments be made to the minister in order to equalize the minister's situation with other employees of the church and to provide a benefit assumed by all citizens.

In 1983, the combined Social Security tax is 13.4%. It is divided equally for most persons; that is, 6.7% paid by the employer and 6.7% paid by the employee. The 1983 self-employed tax, which must be paid by the clergy is 9.35%.

In 1984, the self-employed will be required to pay the total of the combined employer-employee amount, which at 7% each, makes a 14% total. A 2.7% tax credit will be given to all who pay on the self-employed basis for that year. This credit will be reduced to 2.3% in 1985, to 2% in 1986 and phased out (or further reduced) by 1990.

Percentages, however, do not tell the full story. Here is an example. If your pastor's salary, including the value of housing, is \$21,000.00 in 1983 and your church gives the pastor a 10% salary increase, or \$2,100.00 in 1984, it will not be enough to pay his or her full Social Security tax.

WOMEN IN THE SPIRIT: *called & free*

Are you interested in joining over 2,500 women in the United Church of Christ to discuss concerns, hear exciting speakers, participate in uplifting worship, and talk about hopes and dreams for the UCC? If so, plan on attending the second National Meeting of UCC Women to be held in July 12-16 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Registration forms have been sent to all churches in the Southeast Conference. Register now and join UCC women throughout the nation to celebrate unity and diversity at this national meeting!

NEWS AND NOTES

Our sympathy and prayers are given to the family of William Carlton Shaffer who died on Oct. 20, 1983. Mr. Shaffer's widow, Mrs. Marian Fidler is the daughter of Rev. George A. Fidler, pastor of St. John's United Church in Cullman, AL.

Our concerns and prayers are extended to our Southeast Conference Intern, Rev. Sandra Ann Mullins and her family. Sandye's father, Mr. George Mullins of Dayton, Ohio recently underwent major surgery in New York.

(Continued on page 6)

SS TAX (Continued)

The SS tax for that pastor will be \$2,373.00 in 1984. That pastor will pay almost \$650 more in taxes in 1984 than in 1983. The real increase is \$1,453.00, not \$2,100.00. It is possible that your pastor will not have a 10% increase or even enough increase in salary to pay the increased taxes for 1984 or 1985.

In light of this Social Security legislation, all major denominations are now recommending that the church share in this increased cost. The PFCC recommends that Christian Churches, related units and organizations provide a Tax Offset allowance equal to at

least one-half of the total Social Security tax that must be paid by their pastors. In regard to method, remember, a church cannot pay any portion of its minister's SS tax. What we are proposing is that this "offset allowance" be paid directly to the minister. Budgetwise, it is a separate item from salary. We recommend it be listed in the church budget along with the amount the church now must pay for SS for lay employees.

Though this "offset allowance" becomes reportable and is taxable income for ministers, it can provide a way to partially meet this requirement more equitably. Will you please bring this to the attention of your church? As one of our colleagues, Dean Wright of the American Baptist M & M Board, puts it, "This proposal for a Social Security allowance for ministers to be provided by ABC churches and organizations is fair timely and necessary."

CURT'S NUGGETS

(From the desk of Curtis R. Schumacher, Pleasant Hill, TN)

How can we expect God to see us through to better days if He can't count on us in dark days?

Conference Calendar

- January 1 - New Year's Day
- 6 - Epiphany
- 15 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
- 18-25 - Week of Prayer For Christian Unity
- 22 - Covenant Sunday
- 27-28 - SEC Board of Directors Meeting Chattanooga, TN
- February 5 - Church Vocations Sunday
- 12 - Race Relations Sunday
Lincoln's Birthday
- 18 - East Alabama Sweetheart Banquet
- 20 - Washington's Birthday

NEWS AND NOTES

(CONTINUED)

The North Alabama Association's Church & Ministry Committee announced the Service of Ordination for Bobby Smith and Lawson Clark, was held on January 8, 1983, at 3:00 p.m. at the Caddo Congregational Christian Church.

Sunday, December 4th, was a special stewardship Sunday at Pleasant Hill Community Church in Tennessee. Rev. Robert Peeples based his sermon on the offering for the repair of the Temple, which was described in II Chronicles 24. As a fitting conclusion to the service, members and contributing friends, as an act of dedication, brought cards of intention for 1984 to the chancel and placed them in a "Joash Chest" which Bob had made for the occasion.

Dr. David L. Beebe of Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC in Chattanooga, TN, was honored

with an "Ecumenical Service Award" on November 9th by the Tennessee Association of Churches. In addition, Dr. Beebe received the "Ecumenical Plaque" for the East Tennessee Region.

Rev. Ira W. Chace of Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA has resigned his position there as of the end of February, 1984.

Our deepest Christian sympathy is extended to Dr. David Beebe and his family, especially his niece and her husband, Michelle and Ed King, in the death of their 5 year old son Clifford Earl King following an automobile accident.

Vera Van Cleave, 101, sister of Rev. Dr. A.R. Van Cleave, died Saturday, December 31, 1983. Funeral services were conducted by Rev. Wallace Roberts and Rev. Joe French at Wadley Christian Church, UCC. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Dr. Van Cleave & family.

SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30359

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